



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS  
WASHINGTON, DC 20420

# DIVERSITY@WORK

A PUBLICATION OF THE OFFICE OF DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT & EEO, [WWW.VA.GOV/DMEEO](http://WWW.VA.GOV/DMEEO)

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 4

MAY/JUNE 2003

## Q&A

### In Service to Women Veterans

*Dr. Irene Trowell-Harris, Director of the Center for Women Veterans, was the first African American female promoted to general officer in the Air National Guard. A graduate of Yale and Columbia with advanced degrees in public health and education—and the recipient of numerous awards and honors spanning a 38-year military career—Ms. Trowell-Harris talked with us recently about her role as VA's lead advocate for approximately 1.7 million women vets.*

**Q:** From your view, what's the most significant hurdle for women veterans?

**Dr. Trowell-Harris:** I think the biggest challenge is being aware of the benefits and services available and recognizing that they actually *are* vets. Many women think that if they didn't serve in combat, they're not veterans. That's a misperception.

**Q:** How is your office addressing that?

**Dr. Trowell-Harris:** The Center is using

an aggressive mass media campaign to reach more women who have served our country. We're working with the Center for Minority Veterans, VHA, VBA, NCA, VSOs, and other women's and veteran's groups to get the word out about benefits and services. We're also using town hall meetings, media interviews, keynote speeches, veterans' forums, pamphlets, and an improved Web site to spread the word. We've increased collaborative efforts with other agencies as well. Thousands of women nationally participated in our May 12th Women's Checkup Day, for instance.



The Center for Women Veterans serves as an information clearinghouse. We've responded to more than 1,200 public inquiries since October 2001. Plus, we've developed answers to the 25 most-asked questions from women veterans using VA's Inquiry Routing and Information System, and those FAQs are posted on our Web site at [www.va.gov/womenvet](http://www.va.gov/womenvet).

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#### Bookmarks

- **Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies**, <http://library.gc.cuny.edu/research/mideast.asp>
- **Aspira**, [www.aspira.org](http://www.aspira.org)
- **Ability Magazine**, [www.abilitymagazine.com](http://www.abilitymagazine.com)
- **Indian Health Service**, [www.ihs.gov/generalweb/links/americanindian](http://www.ihs.gov/generalweb/links/americanindian)
- **African American World**, [www.pbs.org/wnet/aaaworld](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/aaaworld)
- **Military Women's Firsts**, <http://userpages.aug.com/captbarb/firsts.html>
- **Disabled American Veterans**, [www.dav.org](http://www.dav.org)

## CELEBRATE!

### National Asian Pacific American Heritage Month

VA proudly joins the Nation in celebrating National Asian Pacific American Heritage Month in May. This year's theme is "Salute to Liberty."

In June 1977, Representatives Frank Horton and Norm Mineta introduced a House resolution calling on the President to proclaim the first 10 days of May as Asian Pacific American Heritage Week. President Jimmy Carter signed a joint

resolution in 1979 declaring the first Asian Pacific American Heritage Week. In 1990, President George H.W. Bush expanded the celebration to the entire month.

For information on VA's National Asian American/Pacific Islander Program, contact Carolyn Wong via e-mail at [carolyn.wong@mail.va.gov](mailto:carolyn.wong@mail.va.gov). ■



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- Asian Diversity Magazine
- Black MBA Magazine
- Business & Legal Reports
- DiversityCareers.com
- Federal Employees News
- FedNews Online
- FindLaw
- Government Executive
- HireDiversity.com
- Hispanic Business
- HR Executive Magazine
- Indian Country Today
- Newsweek
- Journal of Issues in Nursing
- Pew Hispanic Center
- SHRM
- The Access Board
- USAToday.com
- Washingtonpost.com
- Workforce magazine
- Workindex.com



**For More Info**

For special observance theme information and diversity-related events, visit our Web site and select the Calendar link.

## FIELD NOTES

### News You Can Use

#### D-TV Guide

You may have caught our Diversity News broadcast on VA Communications Channel 2 on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Our Web site now hosts updates on the show, including monthly topics and schedules.

► **More info:** [www.va.gov/dmeeo/diversitynews.htm](http://www.va.gov/dmeeo/diversitynews.htm).

#### Bias Workshop

On May 15-16, 2003, the Office of DM&EEO, in partnership with the Employee Education System (EES), sponsored the second in a series of free diversity training workshops: "Moving Beyond Bias."

The two-day session was held in Washington, DC. International Training Consortium presented the session, which focused on heightening sensitivity to the importance and power of written and spoken language in all aspects of an organization's management, mission, and culture. Twenty-eight employees from VA Central Office and the field participated in the workshop.

► **More info:** Contact Wanda Jones at (202) 501-2089.

#### First AISES Intern at VA

Lindsay Tarbell, VA's first American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES) intern, reported to the Office of DM&EEO for summer employment. Ms. Tarbell, a Mohawk American Indian from the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe in Akwesasne, upstate New York, attends Clarkson University. One of her duties will be to assist the Special Emphasis Program for American Indians and Alaskan Natives.

► **More info:** [www.aises.org](http://www.aises.org).

#### Equal Pay Act Turns 40

On June 10, 1963, President John F. Kennedy signed the Equal Pay Act (EPA) into law. At the time, full-time working women were paid on average 59 cents to the dollar earned by their male counterparts, according to government data.

The EPA is the oldest workplace civil rights law enforced by the EEOC, predating passage of the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964 by a year.

► **More info:** [www.eeoc.gov/epa/anniversary/epa-40.html](http://www.eeoc.gov/epa/anniversary/epa-40.html).

## WEB SITE SPOTLIGHT

### The White House Initiative on AAPIs

[www.aapi.gov](http://www.aapi.gov)

**Content:** The White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders Web site hosts the activities of President Bush's Advisory Commission and the Interagency Working Group. The Initiative Office, which falls under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is responsible for implementing Executive Order 13216, Increasing Opportunity and Improving Quality of Life of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

**Must-see feature:** The Resources link offers useful fact sheets, demographic data, and reports. Included are AAPI Census data and AAPI Appointees in the Bush Administration.

**Contact info:** Phone, fax, address, and general e-mail contact information is provided via the Contact Us link.

**Accessibility:** Click the Accessibility link at the bottom of any page for help accessing the site content via e-mail, phone, fax, or TDD.

## SPECIAL EMPHASIS

### The Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967

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*The Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 (ADEA) protects employees and job applicants age 40 and older from discrimination. Here's an overview of the act, adapted from EEOC's "Facts About Age Discrimination."*

Under the ADEA, it is unlawful to discriminate against a person because of his or her age with respect to such factors as hiring, firing, promotion, layoff, compensation, and training, among others. It's also unlawful to retaliate against a person for opposing discriminatory age-based employment practices or for filing an age discrimination charge, testifying, or participating in an ADEA investigation.

The ADEA includes language protecting apprenticeship programs, job notices and advertisements, pre-employment inquiries, and benefits as well. Following is an overview of the coverage.

#### APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS

It is generally unlawful for apprenticeship programs to discriminate on the basis of age. Age limitations in these programs are valid only if they fall within ADEA exceptions or if the EEOC grants exemption.

#### JOB NOTICES AND ADVERTISEMENTS

The ADEA makes it unlawful to include age preferences, limitations, or specifications in job notices or advertisements. A job notice or advertisement may specify an age limit, however, in rare circum-

stances where age is shown to be a "bona fide occupational qualification."

#### PRE-EMPLOYMENT INQUIRIES

The ADEA doesn't prohibit an employer from asking an applicant's age or date of birth. However, because such inquiries may deter older workers from applying or may indicate possible intent to discriminate based on age, they are closely scrutinized for lawful intent.

#### BENEFITS

The Older Workers Benefit Protection Act of 1990 amended the ADEA to prohibit employers from denying benefits to older employees. An employer may reduce benefits based on age only if the cost of providing the reduced benefits to older workers is the same as the cost of providing benefits to younger workers.

#### WAIVERS OF ADEA RIGHTS

An individual may agree to waive his or her rights or claims under the ADEA. However, there are specific standards that must be met for a waiver to be considered valid.

► **More info:** [www.eeoc.gov/laws/adea.html](http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/adea.html). ■



## INSIDE STORY

### Affirmative Employment Program Focus: VHA

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*Part 2 of our series on VA's Affirmative Employment Program. This time, we look at how the Veterans Health Administration fared in FY 2002.*

As the largest VA Administration, VHA drives the overall trends in workforce change at VA.

**Onboard Numbers.** There were 181,432 permanent employees in VHA nationally at the end of FY 2002, a decrease of 1,446 from the previous year and 3,272 from FY 1997. The largest loss occurred in White male representation (-0.38%), while Asian females experienced the greatest increase (+0.15%).

**Leadership Pipeline.** Women as a group gained a +418 representation in GS-13 to GS-15 positions.

**Turnover: 2002 and Beyond.** There were 8,752 new hires, 4,094 conversions, and 328 other gains, for a total of 13,174 gains at VHA in FY 2002. Of these, 47.43 percent were in occupations where these groups were underrepresented. There were 5,048 retirements and 8,835 other losses, for a total of 13,883 separations, plus a few changes in status. The representation of women and minorities increased by 0.38 percent. There were 27,831 permanent employees eligible for retirement at the end of FY 2002. An additional 42,252 will become eligible by the end of FY 2007.

► **More info:** Download the FY 2002 AEP Report at [www.va.gov/dmeeo/annualreports.htm](http://www.va.gov/dmeeo/annualreports.htm). ■

## ***Diversity@Work***

Newsletter published bimonthly by the Office of Diversity Management & Equal Employment Opportunity. To subscribe or unsubscribe, send an e-mail request to [dmeeo@mail.va.gov](mailto:dmeeo@mail.va.gov).

### **CONTACT US**

We moved in May, so please make note of the following contact changes.

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Visit our Web site for additional staff e-mail addresses.

### **COMING SOON**

- ▶ More Q&A With the Director of VA's Center for Women Veterans
- ▶ Women's Equality Day
- ▶ Web Site Spotlight
- ▶ More news, tools, and views!

## **DM&EEO ONLINE**

The mission of the Office of DM&EEO is to provide leadership in creating and sustaining a diverse workplace free of discrimination at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Here's a sampling of new online tools that can help *you* promote the employment of veterans, women, minorities, and people with disabilities:



- ▶ News headlines
  - ▶ Diversity News broadcast topics
  - ▶ National APA Heritage Month resources
- Bookmark our site; we're here to serve you.



## **2003 DIVERSITY CALENDAR**

### **National Asian Pacific American Heritage Month**

May

[www.infoplease.com/spot/asianhistory1.htm](http://www.infoplease.com/spot/asianhistory1.htm)

### **Older Americans Month**

May

[www.aoa.gov/press/oam/oam.asp](http://www.aoa.gov/press/oam/oam.asp)

### **Federal Asian Pacific American Council (FAPAC) Congressional Seminar & Conference**

May 12-16

Arlington, VA

[www.fapac.org](http://www.fapac.org)

### **Armed Forces Day**

May 17

### **Memorial Day**

May 26 (observed)

[www.usmemorialday.org](http://www.usmemorialday.org)

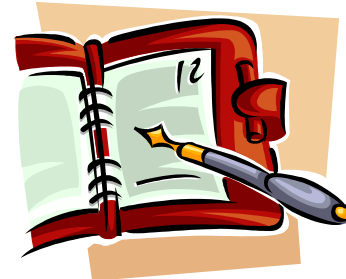
### **Flag Day**

June 14

### **Juneteenth**

June 19

[www.juneteenth.com](http://www.juneteenth.com)



### **LOOKING AHEAD:**

#### **Independence Day**

July 4

#### **National Veterans Wheelchair Games**

July 5-9

Long Beach, CA

[www.pva.org](http://www.pva.org)

#### **National Urban League Conference**

July 26-30

Pittsburgh, PA

[www.nul.org](http://www.nul.org)

*For more events, visit our Web site and select the Calendar link.*